



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12

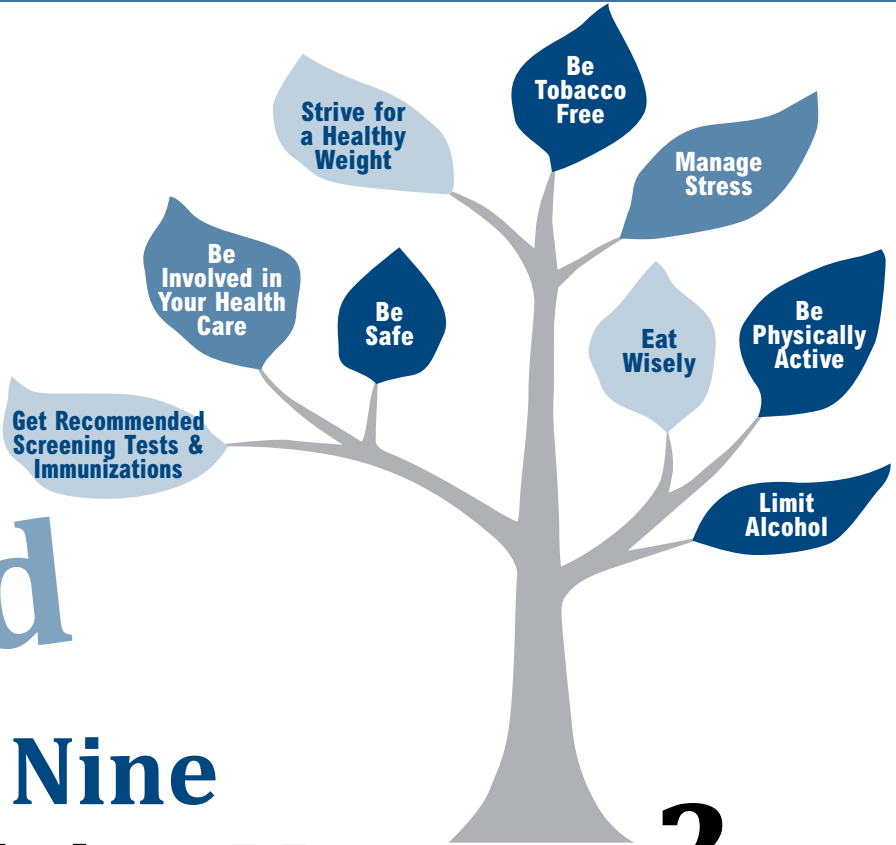


Volume 9, Issue 4

Winter 2011-2012

Have
You
Heard

about the **Nine** Healthy Living Messages?



The VA cares about your health. We want you to be involved in your healthcare. We want you to get the tools you need to be healthy.

If people stopped smoking, started eating healthy foods and got in shape, so many diseases could be prevented. The World Health Organization estimates at least 80% of all cases of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and 40% of cancer could be prevented. Most of us could improve things in our lives that can affect our health.

Your health care team wants to work with you. We can help teach you how to be healthy. We can also help you manage health problems based on what you want to know and what is important to you. Your health care plan is best when you actively work with your provider and health care team.

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The VA's Nine Healthy Living Messages:

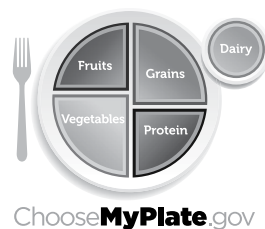
1. **Be Involved in Your Health Care.**

Work with your health care team to improve your health. Plan for your visits by writing down the questions and concerns you want to raise. Share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit. Always take a list of your medicines with you. Ask questions. Ask again if you do not understand. Take a family member or friend with you.

2. **Be Tobacco Free.** It is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect the health of your family members. All forms of tobacco are harmful. This includes cigars, pipes, snuff, chewing tobacco, and electronic or smokeless cigarettes.



3. **Eat Wisely.** Eat a variety of foods including vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Limit salt, fat, and sugar.



4. **Be Physically Active.** Aim for at least 2 ½ hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Every 10-minute session counts. Physical activity is anything that gets the body moving. Start at a comfortable level. Once this



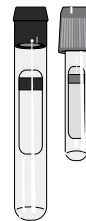
begins to seem easy, add a little more activity each time. Then try doing it more often.

5. **Strive for a Healthy Weight.** If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help. If your weight is normal, maintain it.

6. **Limit alcohol.** If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation. Women should have no more than 1 drink a day; men no more than 2 drinks a day. Don't binge-drink.



7. **Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations.** Ask which screening tests and immunizations are right for you.



8. **Manage Stress.** Pay attention to stress. Learn about ways to help you manage and reduce your stress.

9. **Be Safe.** Find out how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, falls, and motor vehicle crashes. Take action to protect yourself and those you love from harm.



**For more information go to
www.prevention.va.gov**

Submitted by:
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New Website: Quit Tobacco

The “*QUIT TOBACCO – make everyone proud*” website is now available to Veterans. The site is targeted to meet the needs of Active Military and Veteran populations. It provides online tools to quit tobacco use. These include live chat services, personalized quit plans, and other interactive support systems. It is available 24 hours/7 days a week. This can help meet the needs of Veterans balancing the challenges of readjustment to home, work, and family while also trying to quit tobacco use. Veterans who are enrolled for care in VA can access information tailored for them by clicking on the section “VA Veterans.”

<http://www.ucanquit2.org/>

Does Washing Your Hands Really Work?

Yes! The ten most common causes of spreading disease are your fingers! You can spread or catch germs by touching another person or touching contaminated objects or surfaces then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.

Many germs can be transmitted by indirect contact. For example, if you touch a contaminated object or surface and then touch your own mouth, eyes, or nose before washing your hands.

Wash your hands as soon as possible AFTER:

- Using the bathroom or changing diapers
- Sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing
- Touching a cut or open sore
- Being outside or touching pets
- Being around a sick relative or friend
- Handling the garbage
- Getting your hands dirty
- BEFORE and AFTER handling or eating food



For effective hand washing follow these steps:

1. Remove any jewelry or rings.
2. Use warm water and wet hands thoroughly.
3. Use soap and lather very well.
4. Scrub hands, wrists, forearms, between your fingers and under nails for 30 seconds.
5. Rinse thoroughly.
6. Turn off faucet or tap with paper towel.
7. Dry hands with the use of paper towel or dryer.
8. Avoid touching dirty surfaces (door handles, light switches) as you leave the bathroom.



What about hand sanitizers?

When there is no soap or water available, waterless hand scrubs are a good option. These are made with ethyl alcohol mixed with emollients and other agents. When using, it is best to rub hands together until hands are completely dry. Hand sanitizers do not work well when you are trying to clean off dirt, blood, or other organic materials.

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness. Think about all of the things that you or other people have touched today – from the telephones to hand rails to the toilet. You can't wear rubber gloves all day long, but you can wash your hands so those germs don't get a chance to make you or someone else sick.

Submitted by:
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The Women's View

Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Sleep – something we all need, but many of us do not get enough of it. Insomnia (trouble sleeping) is common for both pre-deployment and post-deployment service members.

Insomnia makes it difficult to fall asleep at night, or it wakes you during the night or too early in the morning. Poor sleep can leave you feeling tired during the day and without enough energy for your daily activities.

Common causes of sleep problems are stress, parenting, and menopause. Another cause of insomnia can be sleep apnea, a disorder where a closed airway causes a pause in breathing. Symptoms include loud snoring with gasps and abnormal sleepiness, even with a full night of sleep. A doctor can treat this problem based on a routine check-up.

Life can be stressful, and losing sleep makes coping more difficult. Healthy sleep habits can lower stress and boost your energy throughout the day. The good news is that there are things you can do to improve your sleep, and these begin with your bedtime routine.

Here are some tips:

- › Make sleep a habit. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- › Do not read or watch TV in bed. Use your bed only for sleep or sexual activity.
- › Avoid caffeine (coffee, cola drinks) for at least 6 hours before going to bed.
- › Avoid exercise right before bedtime.
- › Do not drink alcohol or smoke within 2 hours of bedtime.
- › Avoid long naps during the day.
- › If you cannot sleep after trying for 20-30 minutes, get up and try a quiet activity such as reading or listening to music.

Want help with your sleep problem? Please contact your Primary Care Provider to talk about your sleep and the treatment options available to you.

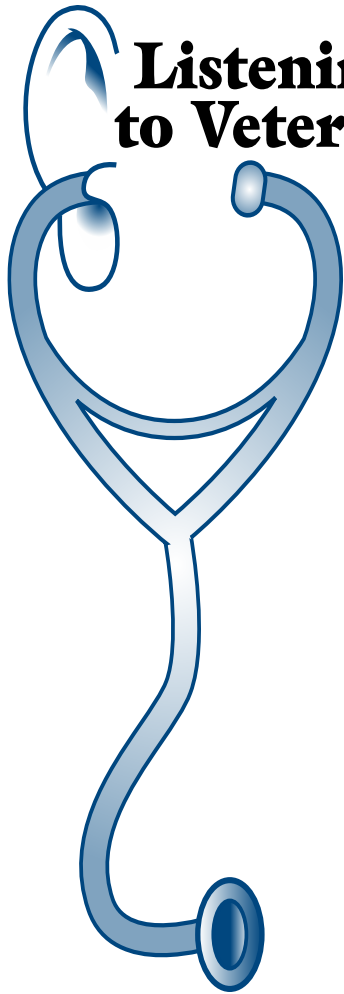
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What is an Eating Disorder?

When we say someone has an eating disorder we mean that they have a severe problem in the way they are eating or the way they feel about food. They may be eating too much or not enough and they may worry too much about their weight. People with eating disorders often have a distorted self image. They may feel fat or ugly even if they are not.



Bulimia, anorexia, and binge eating are the most common eating disorders in the United States.

Bulimia involves out-of-control eating (binging) followed by efforts to get rid of the calories that were consumed. This is done either by making yourself vomit (purging), using laxatives, or extreme exercising. People with bulimia are preoccupied with self-image, such as body shape and weight. They will often talk about bingeing and purging in the same way people with addictions talk about their substance abuse problems. For example, they say that they wish they could stop, but feel compelled to binge and purge.

Anorexia is an inability to maintain a healthy body weight. It also involves an obsessive fear of gaining weight. People with anorexia often believe they look heavy even though they are thin. They feel hunger, but will only eat very small amounts of food. They often have beliefs about certain types of food, for example, that you will stay thin by not eating any white foods, like bread, potatoes, or white rice. Anorexia is a serious mental disorder. It has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder.

People with bulimia or anorexia also typically have other disorders such as depression or anxiety. They often have problems in their relationships with others.

Binge eating is also an eating disorder that can affect your health. Those who are in the habit of overeating are not necessarily seen as having an eating disorder. This is the case even though the serious health risks posed by being overweight or obese are well known. However, 25 to 50 percent of obese people engage in episodes of out-of-control eating and might benefit from professional help.

Hereditry and irrational beliefs about food and body image play a role in eating disorders. Researchers have noted that those who suffer from eating disorders have a hard time letting themselves feel negative emotions. They will eat to find relief from their feelings of loneliness, fear, anger, or rejection. Then they may try to get control over their feelings by

controlling their eating. They often believe that their basic self-worth depends on their weight and appearance.

Treatment involves learning:

- better ways of coping with negative feelings.
- healthier eating behaviors.
- healthier ways of getting social and emotional needs met.

There is help available for those with an eating disorder. Talk to your VA provider. There are skilled clinicians who are able to help you.



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Important note: We are not able to mail this newsletter to you. It can be found in waiting rooms of your VA Medical Center and outpatient clinics.

You can also subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter by going to the VISN 12 webpage www.visn12.va.gov Click on the Newsletters link on the left side of the page.



Your best source for information about your health will always be your health care team. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to ask questions about your health concerns.

Phone Numbers for VISN 12 Hospitals

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Hines: | 708-202-8387 |
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| Jesse Brown: | 312-569-8387 |
| Madison: | 608-256-1901 |
| Milwaukee: | 1-888-469-6614 |
| North Chicago: | 1-800-393-0865 |
| Tomah: | 1-800-872-8662 |

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or Idea for Future Articles**

Do you have an "Ask An Expert" question or an idea for a future article? Your ideas can be e-mailed or mailed to the Senior Editor.

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